

B3
--20. (New) An input device according to claim 12, wherein either the first warning unit or the second warning unit, or both the first warning unit and the second warning unit, are any one of a display device, an audio output device, a ringing device, and a light emitting device.--

- - REMARKS - -

Claims 1-16 were pending in the application. Claims 1-3 and 9-11 have been rewritten. The changes to the rewritten claims from the previous versions to the rewritten versions are shown in Appendix A (attached hereto as Tab A), with brackets for deleted matter and underlines for added matter. New claims 17-20 have been added. No new matter has been added as a result of this amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-3, 5-7, 9-11 and 13-15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,373,472 to Palalau et al. (hereinafter "Palalau") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,271,637 to Kushion ("Kushion"). Claims 4, 8, 12 and 16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Palalau in view of Kushion, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,270,689 to Hermann ("Hermann"). The claim rejections are respectfully traversed. The claims have nevertheless been amended to clarify the claimed invention and to eliminate any ambiguity that may have been the basis for the rejection.

With respect to independent claim 1, although it appears that Palalau discloses a warning graphic being displayed on a display, this references does not disclose anything about the warning graphic being displayed due to the number of mistakes made by an operator. And although Kushion appears to disclose a determination of an error being made when a detected value falls outside a predetermined range, this reference does not disclose anything about a preceding manual operation being determined as a mistake when, within a predetermined period of time after any one of the function switches has been manually operated, another function switch is manually operated. These same limitations are likewise absent from Hermann. Claim 1 is therefore not rendered unpatentable by the combination of these prior art references.

Claims 2, 5, 6 and newly added claim 17 are each dependent on claim 1 and are therefore likewise patentable.

With respect to independent claim 3, none of the prior art references disclose anything about replacing a function of a function switch with a function of another function switch when the counted number of mistakes reaches a predetermined threshold number. Claim 3 is therefore not rendered unpatentable by the combination of these prior art references. Claims 4, 7, 8 and newly added claim 18 are each dependent on claim 3 and are therefore likewise patentable.

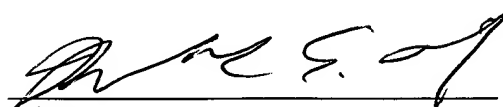
With respect to independent claim 9, although it appears that Palalau discloses a warning graphic being displayed on a display, this reference does not disclose anything about the warning graphic being displayed due to the number of mistakes made by an operator. In addition, Palalau does not disclose anything about a manual operating pad being operable in two or more directions, as required by claim 9. And although Kushion appears to disclose a determination of an error being made when a detected value falls outside a predetermined range, this reference does not disclose anything about a preceding manual operation being determined as a mistake when, within a predetermined period of time after the manual operating pad is operated, the manual operating pad is operated in another operating direction. These same limitations are likewise absent from Hermann. Claim 9 is therefore not rendered unpatentable by the combination of these prior art references. Claims 10, 13, 14 and newly added claim 19 are each dependent on claim 9 and are therefore likewise patentable.

With respect to independent claim 11, none of the prior art references disclose anything about replacing a function of a function switch with a function of the manual operating pad when the counted number of mistakes reaches a predetermined threshold number. Claim 11 is therefore not rendered unpatentable by the combination of these prior art references. Claims 12, 15, 16 and newly added claim 20 are each dependent on claim 11 and are therefore likewise patentable.

The pending claims are believed to truly distinguish over the prior art and to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, such allowance is now earnestly requested. If for

any reason the Examiner is not able to allow the application, he is requested to contact the Applicant's undersigned attorney at (312) 321-4273.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael E. Milz", written over a horizontal line.

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Appendix A

In the Claims:

Please amend claims 1-3 and 9-11 as follows:

1. (Amended) An input device, comprising:

a plurality of function switches each provided corresponding to a plurality of electronic devices for selecting one of these devices by manual operation;

a controller unit for controlling the electronic devices;

a first warning unit for generating warning signals for informing an operator of the function switches of a mistaken action on the function switches; and

a mistake counter means for monitoring the manual operation on the function switches to count and store the number of mistakes on each of the function switches,

wherein the mistake counter means determines [increments the counted number of mistakes by determining], when [one of the function switches is operated] within a predetermined period of time after [another] any one of the function switches has been manually operated another function switch is manually operated, that the preceding [switch] manual operation of the function switch is a mistake, and increments the counted number of mistakes by counting the preceding manual operation of the function switch as a mistake; and

wherein the controller unit instructs the first warning unit to generate the warning signals when the counted number of mistakes reaches a predetermined threshold number.

2. (Amended) An input device according to claim 1, wherein the controller unit allows the electronic device selected by a function switch manually operated in the

first action to be replaced with another device assigned to any of the other [another] function switches after generating the warning signals.

3. (Amended) An input device, comprising:

a plurality of function switches each provided corresponding to a plurality of electronic devices for selecting one of the devices by manual operation;

a controller unit for controlling the electronic devices; and

a mistake counter means for monitoring the manual operation on the function switches to count and store the number of mistakes for each of the function switches,

wherein the mistake counter means determines [increments the counted number of mistakes by determining], when [one of the function switches is operated] within a predetermined period of time after [another] any one of the function switches has been manually operated another function switch is manually operated, that the preceding [switch] manual operation of the function switch is a mistake, and increments the counted number of mistakes by counting the preceding manual operation of the function switch as a mistake; and

wherein the controller unit replaces the assigned electronic device selected by the function switch operated in the preceding manual action with another electronic device selected by [another] any of the other function switches, when the counted number of mistakes reaches a predetermined threshold number.

9. (Amended) An input device, comprising:

a plurality of function switches each provided corresponding to a plurality of electronic devices for selecting one of these devices by manual operation;

a manual operating pad manually manipulatable in two or more directions for selecting a functionality of [the] each electronic device[s] by the operating direction;

a controller unit for instructing [the] each electronic device[s] to execute the function of each electronic device;

a first warning unit for generating warning signals for informing an operator of the manual operating pad of a mistaken action on the manual operating pad; and

a mistake counter means for monitoring the manual operation on the manual operating pad by the operator to count and store the number of mistakes in each operating direction of the manual operating pad,

wherein the mistake counter means determines [increments the counted number of mistakes in an operating direction by determining], when [the manual operating pad is operated in a direction] within a predetermined period of time after the manual operating pad has been manually operated in another operating direction, that the preceding manual operation of the manual operating pad is a mistake, and increments the counted number of mistakes by counting the preceding manual operation of the manual operating pad as a mistake; and

the controller unit instructs the first warning unit to generate the warning signals when the counted number of mistakes reaches a predetermined threshold number.

10. (Amended) An input device according to claim 9, wherein the assignment of the electronic device selected by the preceding manual action to an operating direction can be swapped with another assignment of another device selected in another operating direction by means of the controller unit after generating the warning signals.

11. (Amended) An input device, comprising:

a plurality of function switches each provided corresponding to a plurality of electronic devices for selecting one of the devices by manual operation;

a manual operating pad manually manipulatable in two or more directions for selecting a functionality of [the] each electronic device[s] by the operating direction;

a controller unit for instructing [the] each electronic device[s] to execute the function of each electronic device; and

a mistake counter means for monitoring the manual operation on the manual operating pad by the operator to count and store the number of mistakes in each operating direction of the manual operating pad,

wherein the mistake counter means determines [increments the counted number of mistakes in an operating direction by determining], when [the manual operating pad is operated in a direction] within a predetermined period of time after the manual operating pad has been manually operated in another operating direction, that the preceding manual [switch] operation of the manual operating pad is a mistake, and increments the counted number of mistakes by counting the preceding manual operation of the manual operating pad as a mistake; and

the controller unit replaces the function of the electronic device selected by the operating direction in a preceding manual action of the manual operating pad with another function of the electronic device selected in any of the other operating directions [a succeeding action] when the counted number of mistakes reaches a predetermined threshold number.